Hardwire Yourself to Be Happy

26 Ways to Hoist Your Happiness to New Heights

According to researchers, happiness is partly inherited (approximately 50%), partly within your control (40%) and partly dependent on circumstances (10%). Expanding your happiness is your responsibility and your choice. We control our thoughts, our thoughts control our emotions and our emotions and thoughts dictate our actions, which in turn look for thoughts and emotions that reinforce those actions, in a circuitous pattern. Thought and behavior patterns can be easily interrupted and changed often by becoming aware of them and deciding to do something different. What follows is not intended to be an absolute list of ways to boost your happiness. I've included some of my favorite happiness resources on the last page as well as my own contact information, in case you want more happiness help beyond this list. I'm passionate about your happy. If you're reading this, you must be too. Go you!

Cheers to a happier you!

Hugs,

Lisa Z

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1. **Be kinder to yourself.** You have had exactly the experiences you were meant to have, good and bad. These experiences make you the perfect you for right now and have set the stage for your future. You are amazing.

2. **Set yourself free from unreasonable expectations.** Wherever you are right now is where you are meant to be even if it isn't where you think you should be.

3. **Stop should-shaming.** Saying "I should" means you are disappointing yourself by not doing something. You know you would benefit from doing it but you don't choose to. Decide -- to do or not and move on. No guilt.

4. **Say nice things about yourself.** Even if you don't think you're perfect, say nice things about yourself. Don't discount your value or self-deprecate-even in the name of humor. Honor the good in you by being the first to acknowledge it each day.

5. **Accept compliments.** If someone is paying you a compliment, chances are they mean it and give it with the best intentions. Accept it and say thank you.

6. **Eliminate negative messages about yourself, your friends and family and your life.** You are good enough. Your life is either good enough or you can change it. Friends and family are either good enough or you can change your relationship with them. Holding negative messages about yourself, others or life in general is toxic. Everything is changeable from the messages themselves to your reality. This may take practice but it will have dramatic effects on your happiness.

7. **Just breathe.** Spend 15 minutes each day focusing on your breathing. Quiet your mind. Notice how your body feels (anxious, tense, out of alignment, sore, tired, relaxed). Stress may be causing your breathing to be shallow or erratic. Counting to 4 as you inhale and again as you exhale keeps your mind focused on the breath and away from mental chatter. Happiness can be boosted when you start and end each day centered around quiet, mindful breathing.

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8. **Explore nature.** The natural world is miraculous and symbiotic when uninterrupted. Observing it and being part of it on a hike, walk, kayak, or simply sitting outside is life renewing. It reminds you of both your significance and insignificance in this giant world in which we live.

9. **Learn something new.** Whether it's cooking, sewing, a language, wine tasting-- or whatever appeals to you. Learning new things, not only helps stave off dementia and Alzheimer's disease by promoting new neural connections in the brain, it enriches your world, and introduces you to new people with similar interests while giving you a sense of accomplishment for going out there and doing it.

10. **Learn about a place in the world you've never been to or have been to but would like to learn more.** Think of it like the projects you used to do in school. Read about the history, the people, the culture, the foods, the language. Share what you learned with someone. Cook a meal you might eat in this place if you were to visit there. What are three differences and three similarities between life where you live and life in this new place? What should we all know and appreciate about this place and its people?

11. **Express gratitude.** Many in the mindfulness and happiness business speak about this and science unanimously supports the benefits of gratitude on happiness. Research on happiness and life satisfaction identify this as critical to enjoying life. Write down or say what you are grateful for at least four times per week.

12. **Write a gratitude letter.** Write a letter to someone who positively impacted your life. The person may or may not be aware of how they influenced you. Tell the person how they changed your life for the better. Send this person the letter or if possible, read the letter to him or her by phone or in person.

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13. **Forgive someone.** Write a letter to someone you need to forgive. You will need to determine if you share the letter with the person. There is value in writing the letter even if you can't share with the person you are forgiving because the person doesn't acknowledge that she caused you pain or the they are no longer here. Shared or unshared, by writing the letter, you are telling yourself you will not hold on to anger, pain or resentment because they do not serve the you who lives in happiness and joy. It is much less about the other person and more about your happy heart.

14. **Apologize.** If there is someone in your life or in your past, for whom you regret the negative impact you had on their life for a period of time or an event, let them know you're sorry. Apologize regardless of how much time has passed. This is a gift to both of you. Keep it simple. Don't rehash all the details of it and don't explain why you did what you did. The how's and why's are not important and may seem like you are justifying why you did whatever it was which detracts from the "I'm sorry". All that matters is that you caused a negative impact on someone and you're sorry for it.

15. **Feel your power.** Write down three problems you have faced in the last five years. How did you handle them? Did you easily resolve it or was it difficult? How did you overcome the problem? Describe how you felt when you conquered it? What went right? Think of a situation that you thought was going to be a negative experience. Was it really a negative situation? Even in reflection if the answer to that question is yes, it was a negative situation, write down three to five positive things that came out of the experience.

16. **What went right?** Think of a situation that you thought was going to be a negative experience. Write down three to five positive things that came out of the experience.

17. **Enjoy the day you're in.** We never know how many days we get so each one is important. Don't wait until tomorrow to do the things that mean the most to you. Don't focus on the past or tomorrow. Your history is not your story. Each day is a new blank canvas and you get to decide what goes on it. You get to choose the mood, theme, characters and scene. You choose your reaction to events, circumstances and people. Your day, your choice. Choose happiness.

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18. **Spend time with your important people.** It bears repeating, you never know how many days you get with those who mean the most to you nor they with you. This is important for those who love you and want to spend time with you because they know one day you won't be here and you know one day they won't be here. Don't wait to spend time with them later or someday that may never come.

19. **Do what makes your heart happy.** It's never wrong to do this. We have intuition for a reason. Intuition is part of the old "survival" brain but it's capability is much bigger than survival. When head and heart align, intuition becomes stronger and passion flourishes. You flourish. Synchronicity breeds opportunity. Opportunity creates success in a life you love.

20. **Create a bucket list.** How do you know what you want to accomplish if you haven't written it down and refer back to it often? You will never be bored and regret is also less likely if you have a lifetime "to do" list. List everything you want to do, regardless of whether you think you will ever do it and even if you can come up with a hundred reasons why it won't happen.

21. **Be a dreamer.** Have dreams, write them down, know them intimately. Talk about them with others. Give yourself permission to spend time with your ideal you, dream partner, perfect job or career, hobbies you love, amazing pets, meant-for-you friends, sparkly life. Again, even if you can come up with 100 reasons why these won't happen or can't happen, write down your dreams and doom it all discounts and doubt. Being a dreamer doesn't mean you aren't also practical. Believe me, you can be both.

22. **Create a vision board.** A vision board is a visual reminder of the things that mean the most to you in life; people, places and things you already have that you want to continue and people, places and things you want to draw into your life. Use pictures and words that represent the mood, emotion, action and things you want in the near future. Keep your board where you can see it easily each day and update it as needed.

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23. **Do something you think is scary.** Get uncomfortable. Pick one thing you kind of, or really, want to do, but you're afraid to do it. Decide to conquer your fear. Set a deadline to accomplish it. Tell your friends what you're doing so they can be supportive even if they think you're crazy. You're not setting yourself up for failure; you are going to get to the finish line because you make up your mind to do it. I promise you, this is a power trip not to be missed.

24. **Make it happen;** you are already "enough". Pick one thing you've always wanted to do but haven't because you're not: good enough, smart enough, rich enough, thin enough, educated enough, young enough, old enough, in good enough shape. Pick something you don't think you have time to do or money to do but really, really want to do. Something you've wanted to do for a long time. Pick something you can achieve within one year. That's your deadline- one year. Against your "better judgment", plan it. Step by step, plan how will it come together so you can have it done in one year. Tell yourself all the things you'd say if you were encouraging and supporting your friend in doing this thing.

25. **Journal your bad ass-ness.** Think about the previous 12 months. Write a list of 100 things you did, accomplished, read, studied, achieved, got off your "to do" list, and helped others do. This list will include anything that contributed to your mood, motivation, well-being or someone else's. It will include things like organizing your closet (finally!), implementing a no dishes in the sink standard (mine!), helping a friend through a difficult divorce, getting a puppy or kitty that makes every day happier, learning yoga, losing weight, eating healthier. The list could go on and on. You get the idea. If it made you feel good, better or great, write it down.

26. **Do good things.** Pay it forward, do random and deliberate acts of kindness, smile more, make eye contact with people, hug people (make sure they are ok with it first), volunteer for causes that resonate most with you. Tell the people in your life how much they mean to you and *why*. Let your guard down. Say I love you often. Care, like and love unconditionally. Be the role model you wished you had. See the good in others. Be kind. Make time to help people, animals, and the planet. Spread optimism and positivity. Have no regrets.

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Related Resources I love

1. If you want to see just how happy you are before and after you try these 26 happiness hoisters, take the Authentic Happiness or General Happiness Scale self-tests at https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter. You will have to set up an account but it's totally free.

2. If you want to explore the science of happiness for yourself, I highly recommend, http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/

3. For daily inspiration motivation and excavation, join me on Twitter @bigchangecoach and in my Small Steps 2 Big Change group on FB: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1670499359881040/ as well as on my website: www.smallsteps2bigchange.com

Happiness Books I love

1. **The Tao of Pooh** by Benjamin Hoff

2. **Authentic Happiness**, by Martin Seligman

3. **The How of Happiness,** by Sonja Lyubomirsky

4. **The Art of Happiness**, by the Dalai Lama

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Articles on Happiness

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-zawistowski/10-things-we-can-learn-from-our-dogs-that-will-make-us-happier-and-healthier-humans_b_7772094.html

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-zawistowski/10-things-we-can-learn-from-cats-that-will-make-us-happier-healthier-humans_b_8647868.htm

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-zawistowski/do-what-makes-you-happy_b_8350922.html

http://thezoereport.com/living/wellness/i-used-science-to-get-happy-and-heres-what-happened/?utm_content=lead&utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=5%2F16+TZR%3A+Happiness+Challenge%3A+Box+of+Style&utm_term=thezoereport-engaged+only

I'd love to hear your story. If these tips help you be happier and begin living a life you love, please let me know!

Email me at info@smallsteps2bigchange.com or tag me in a post in the FB group.

Hugs,

Lisa Z

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